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Hampton Roads T/S User Group Newsletter

New vol. 1, no. 8 October 1985

After a year's delay—the QL is officially here!

Sinclair Research has now officially reentered the US market with the introduction of the US-spec QL. A spokesman for Sinclair Research in Nashua, NH, confirmed that the QL is now for sale here. The sendoff was on 2 September 1985.

The original price of $499.00 has been held. This includes the basic QL with a blank microdrive tape plus spreadsheet and word processor software. QL buyers can also get, as mentioned last month, the RGB monitor and the printer that are being made especially for it; prices are $399.00 and $349.00.

Sinclair Research is taking phone orders for the QL and its accessories at (800) 227-1563. The company may be contacted at 1 Sinclair Plaza, Nashua, NH 03061 or at 50 Staniford Street, Boston, MA 02114. American Express cardholders, as mentioned in previous issues, have their own number available for ordering.

UK-spec QLs are available from Bob Dyl at the English Micro Connection, 15 Kilburn Court, Newport, RI 02840 on special order, as are Spectrum Pluses. The Spectrum Plus will not be handled by Sinclair Research in the US.

The QL has had a labored history since its UK introduction in early 1984. US units were promised a year ago, but unexpected problems--faulty microdrive units, ROM shortcomings, and slow software--delayed its US introduction. The machine was said to have the bugs worked out in time for a May 1985 introduction, with the first orders being accepted in April, but the management shakeup and near-bankruptcy of Sinclair Research UK caused yet another delay. Sinclair's financial problems are still being resolved at this writing.

Optimism is now running high at Sinclair Research US, though. The QL has created a lot of interest, according to the spokesman. To get the rest of the story, we will have to wait for the first reviews. Watch this space.

Exit Maxwell; enter Dixons

Robert Maxwell, in a surprising turnaround, has dropped his attempt to save Sinclair Research from receivership. But no sooner did this happen than did another rescuer step in: the UK retailers Dixons, headed by Mark Souhami.

The story, from the 11 August 1985 issue of the *Sunday Times of London*, was reprinted in the September 1985 issue of the CATS (Capitol Area Timex/Sinclair Users Group) newsletter. It started with these comments: "Sir Clive Sinclair is facing what could be the most critical week of his controversial career--a week which might well make or finally break the computer entrepreneur."

Maxwell dropped out of the rescue because he himself needs cash. He is financing new presses for one of his groups of newspapers, for which he has obtained £80 million in loans. No doubt the report issued by accountants investigating Sinclair Research's condition didn't help either. "It confirmed unsold stocks of £35m [million], and operating losses. More important, it concluded that the prospects for Sinclair Research were poor. It would be a gamble for Maxwell therefore to continue with the takeover."

Dixons then stepped in with a £10 million contract. The retailers "bought approximately 160 000 computers and TVs to

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Editor's comments

I got an interesting letter from Jack Roberts of the T/S Connection, 3832 Watterson Avenue, Cincinnati, OH 45227. Addressed to club newsletter editors in general, it describes its story in becoming a Timex computer repair facility.

Jack made the following statements in his letter that disturbed me:

"Many overzealous editors of newsletters, in their desire to feed information to their hungry readers, have erroneously reported a number of things that are not exactly true. It is our sincere wish that this letter will clear the air and state the facts as completely and as accurately as possible.

"Fact: The T/S Connection IS NOT and has NEVER been an authorized Service Facility of the Timex Corporation.

"Fact: The Timex Products Service Department in Little Rock, Ark. continues to do IN and OUT of warranty service on T/S Computer products.

"Fact: Users have the option of where to send an OUT of warranty unit for service."

That's funny, Jack. I seem to recall that it was in the Cincinnati user group's newsletter, presumably with your approval since the T/S Users Group of Greater Cincinnati, seems to be connected with T/S Connection (and your letter seems to confirm this), that reported that you "had bought out Timex' entire repair inventory!", as I reported in the March 1985 issue (my first as editor).

I recall Timex' repair department denying any such buyout when I was trying to get my 2068 back from them immediately after this was printed, so I called Rick Johnson, the president of the Cincinnati user group, to clarify matters. (I should have become suspicious then. However, Timex had lost all credibility in my eyes by then.) As I reported in April's newsletter, Rick said this: "The girls there [at Timex] aren't listening to their own recording! If you call the old Timex Computer Corporation [non-800] number, you will get a recording telling you to get in touch with The T/S Connection for service."

I then went on to report this: "He [Rick] then went on to confirm that The T/S Connection had indeed bought out Timex' inventory; Timex was servicing only warranty repairs . . . ."

I honestly don't see where I as editor misrepresented what was said to me or what I read. If I did, and I don't think that I did, I apologize; but I merely reported what was told to me on the grounds that it was significant news.

The CATS newsletter reported a couple of months ago that such a letter had been printed and was sent to them. A member told me that Timex was pretty upset (he used stronger terms) at the T/S Connection's previous statements. Isn't it funny that the T/S Connection waited until virtually every newsletter in the country reported what I had reported, CATS and LIST being significant exceptions, before setting the record straight!

I got a pleasant surprise in the mail the other day: our first member from out of the area. Barry D. Malpas of Piscataway, NJ, sent us a check for $12.00. At least one person thinks that our newsletter is worthwhile!

I must touch upon something that has proven disappointing to me as editor: the relative lack of club member participation with the newsletter. Virtually every article in every issue has been written by yours truly, with Dave Alford and Leonard Holmes significant exceptions. I was really rather hoping for more from the rest of you for the individual computer pages in particular. I could take the easy way out and copy programs for these pages from other newsletters, but I really don't like that idea: I rely on other newsletters enough for general news articles as it is.

Since my promotion at work back in June, I have had increasingly little time to do the newsletter. If members' contributions don't increase very soon, I will have to make the newsletter bimonthly. I greatly desire ORIGINAL programs, reviews, and hardware/modification articles. ■

Club business

The club administrative meeting of 9 September 1985 was very short, with only a few members attending.

Old business

Bob Sloan reported that his proposed meeting place at the Peninsula Home Builders' Association building had not come through yet. We are still set up in Denbeigh High School until next summer.

New business

We had letters from Mexico, Germany, and the T/S Connection. (See "Editor's comments" on this last letter.) There was praise for the newsletter.

Next administrative meeting: 14 October 1985 at room 152 in Denbeigh High School.

C-5 electric trike now sold in US by PA firm

The Sinclair C-5 electric trike is now being sold in the US. The Newcastle Co., Ltd., Route 18 North, R. D. 3, Box 322, New Castle, PA 16105, telephone (412) 658-4516, is apparently the only US distributor for the C-5.

A spokesman said that the company first started selling it about four months ago. He said that he was out of stock at the time I called (mid-September), but that more were on order. He is selling the C-5 for $1290 each.

The C-5 has been in production since early this year. It has a top speed of 15 miles per hour with a 20-mile range. The trike is, for Sinclair, the subject of a lawsuit and the source of much of his present financial problems. (See previous issues of the newsletter for details.) It is little short of amazing that a US company is doing well with the vehicle.

For more information on the **Hampton Roads T/S User Group**, contact

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The newsletter is normally printed monthly during the first week of each month. The editor reserves the right to delay or cancel printing of a given issue should special considerations arise. Newsletters from other groups exchanging with us should be sent to the editor.

Advertising material must be suitable for photocopying; we reserve editing rights. Advertising rates are as follows:

Whole page	**$15.00**
Half page	**$ 8.00**
Quarter page.	**$ 4.50**

For other portions, for information about discounts for at least three consecutive months of advertising, or for rates for advertiser-supplied insert sheets to be included with an issue, please contact the editor. Classified advertisements are available, either boxed like this information section or typed in the normal justified column format. They are free to Hampton Roads T/S User Group members; for others the cost is $0.25 per line ($2.00 per column inch, or 8 lines). There are no length or content limits ordinarily.

Membership in the Hampton Riads T/S User Group costs $12.00 per year, paid every January. Dues will be prorated for new members starting after January at $1.00 per month for the remaining months in the year. The newsletter is mailed free of charge to members. To receive the newsletter, nonmembers should pay club dues, barring other arrangements. We will exchange newsletters with other clubs. Advertisers will receive a copy of the newsletter that ad appears in. *All checks should be made payable to David Guthrie, Jr., our treasurer.*

1985 VENDORS followup

This is the followup to the vendor listing in the August issue of the newsletter. There were no distinct corrections necessary--at least none that were brought to my attention--just additions and new listings.

This followup follows the same format as the main listing in August, with one addition: the words "also has" refer to additions to the items carried by a vendor that was listed in the August issue--extra items that I was unaware of when compiling the main listing. There are several altogether new entries here as well, bringing the total number of vendors for the Sinclair and Sinclair-derived computers to over 200 in the US and Canada, with just a smattering of UK entries!

I must extend special thanks to Rick Heiser, RMG Enterprises, Russell Electronics, and to everyone else who made a list like this possible. Remember this, troops: support your vendors, and they'll be around tomorrow!

Clifford Associates
13910 Halldale Avenue
Gardena, CA 90249
H/Z-Link adapter, bare board (20)

C. W. Associates
419 North Johnson Street
Ada, OH 45810
S/"Supershaper" (graphics), game (20)

English Micro Connection
also has
M/keyboard overlay (20)
S/"Softaid" (Spec)

Gulf Micro Electronics
1317 Stratford Avenue
Panama City, FL 32404
S/"Smart Text ZX/TS" (10)

HAWC Programming
4604 Apple Tree Drive
Alexandria, VA 22310
S/"Timescreen" (graphics) (10)

John Kuhn
1707 King Street
Jacksonville, FL 32204
S/"Lab Program 2000" (environmental lab program) (10, 20), game (20)
Rem/Member of Northeast Florida Timex-Sinclair Users Group

Larken Electronics
R. R. 2
Navan, ON K0A 2S0
CANADA
H/disc drive interface (supports Shugart drive) (20)
Rem/Highly rated

D. Lipinski Software
also has
M/buyers' guide

Melvin MacKaron
P. O. Box 14466
Albuquerque, NM 87191
S/"The Complete Teacher" (electronic gradebook) (20)

Newcastle Co., Ltd.
Route 18 North
R. D. 3, Box 322
New Castle, PA 16105
M/C-5 electric vehicle

Peripherals Direct, Ltd.
P. O. Box 4301
Northbrook, IL 60065
H/Amdek 3" disc drive (20)

Pleasantrees Programming
P. O. Box 2034
Mesa, AZ 85204
H/disc drives (20)
S/"Profile 2068", games (20)

Kraig D. Pritts
3421 Oneida Street
Chadwicks, NY 13319
S/"Ham Helper" series (several programs) (10, 20)

QuarTers
See WMJ Data Systems

QZX
2025 O'Donnell Drive
Las Cruces, NM 88001
M/magazine

RMG Enterprises
also has
C/10, 20
H/1016 (10), 2040, paper, cassettes (10, 20), A & J Microdrives (20), Gesso products, etc.
S/various (10, 20)

Saguaro Software
P. O. Box 1864
Telluride, CO 81435
H/Amdek 3" disc drive, diskettes (20)

Sinclair Research, Ltd.
also has
M/ZX81 parts on exchange

Software Farm
155 Whiteladies Road
Clifton, Bristol BS8 2RF
UNITED KINGDOM
S/high-resolution games (10)

Software Services
14307 BenBrush
San Antonio, TX 78248
S/"Softaid" (Spec)

Van Vanger
Bethlehem Tool
P. O. Box 346-C
Retreat Road
Island Falls, ME 04747
H/plug guard

Variety Sales
175 Osborn Avenue
New Haven, CT 06511-2852
H/A & J Microdrives and wafers, Centronics printer kit for drive, etc. (20)

WMJ Data Systems
also has
M/*QuarTers* magazine

Thomas Woods
also has
M/new newsletter: *Memonotes*

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Leonard Holmes reviews a Panasonic KXP-1091 printer

Panasonic KXP-1091 Printer Review

Leonard Holmes

I have been watching printer prices and capabilities for the last year, and I finally sprung for a full-sized printer. Consumer Reports magazine helped me a great deal by rating the Panasonic KXP-1091 at the top of their list. This printer allows "near letter quality" print which is as close to a daisy wheel as you can come. It also prints 120 c.p.s. in a draft quality mode. Compressed print is also possible. The best thing about these 3 modes is that they are selectible via a switch on the outside of the printer!

In addition, these and other modes are programmable. Theoretically, all printer codes are obtainable from the TS1000 or TS2068 using the Aerco (or Memotech) Centronics Parallel Interface. I have had difficulty getting continuous underlining and wide print. There is probably a way to do it, I just haven't figured it out yet.

This printer is dot addressable, it emulates the IBM graphics printer in certain modes, prints *italics and foreign characters*. It will print superscripts and subscripts, but I haven't figured them out either. The printer is small (about 16" x 11" x 4.5"). It includes a tractor feed as well as a friction feed mechanism.

The best thing is the price. Retailing for around $600, it is now selling as low as $221.95. This price is from Harmony Video and Computers in NYC. Call them at 800-441-1144 or 718-627-1000 for information. They hold personal checks, and add 4% for credit cards.

In short, I am pleased with the printer. It will work well with my next computer (Commodore Amiga?) and is already keeping my Timex ticking.

Programming tips,
part 2

To correct last month's "Programming tips": the 1000 and 2068 store numbers in five bytes as stated, but there is an extra sixth byte used as a "slug" to mark these five bytes. So the number 14.56 is stored as 11 bytes: 5 for each character, 1 for the slug, and 5 for the floating-point representation.

It is worth remarking that the old ZX80 used only 2 bytes to represent numbers, so that you were limited to integers in calculations from 32 767 to -32 768. The first several issues of *Sync* and some books on the ZX80 had programs involving simulating floating-point numbers for calculations, as an example, for money. Who said that the good old days were really that good?

It is also worth remarking that the 1000's and 2068's floating-point arithmetic is

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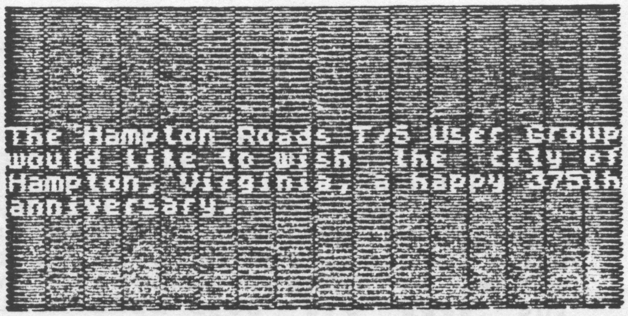
"Softaid" for Spectrum to benefit Ethiopians

The LIST (Long Island Sinclair-Timex Group) newsletter mentions that a new tape is now available for the Spectrum to help the unfortunate in Ethiopia. Called "Softaid," the tape contains ten of the hottest UK games for the Spectrum.

"Softaid" is part of the Band-Aid project, which was started by the song "Do They Know It's Christmas?" released late last year. As with the song, all proceeds will go to the Band-Aid Trust Fund. In fact, a copy of "Do They Know It's Christmas?" is on the other side of the tape.

The article said, "Rod Cousens of Quicksilva organized the software relief project, and hopes that it will raise some £200 000 for the Ethiopians."

"Softaid" is available from Software Services and the English Micro Connection (see "Vendor listings and additions" elsewhere in this issue). The tape from Software Services is just $6.25 + $2.00 for postage and handling for first class mail. As the article said, "The tape is reasonably priced, and everyone should obtain [his] own copy . . . pirated versions won't help dying people one bit."



The Hampton Roads T/S User Group would like to wish the city of Hampton, Virginia, a happy 375th anniversary.

2068 programming tips, part 2

The statements in "Programming tips, part 2" apply to the 2068 as well. However, an additional tip for the long PRINT statement is the use of the print apostrophe, which moves the print position to the beginning of the next line regardless of the previous print position. The statement in "Programming tips, part 2" can be replaced on the 2068 with this:

```
3005 PRINT TAB 10;"BATTLESHIPS";
TAB 10;"----------";AT 3,0;"SET
 UP YOUR SHIPS ON THE TOPHAL
F<OF THE SCREEN."''"ALL COORDINA
TES SHOULD BE IN THEFORM:LETTER
FOLLOWED BY NUMBER."''
```

There seems to be a lot of confusion regarding use of attributes in and out of PRINT statements. To put it simply, PAPER, INK, FLASH, etc., affect the whole screen when used as separate statements. For example,

```
1000 PAPER 4 INK 6
```

will make the whole screen green and the color of the printing yellow--not exactly a beautiful combination. If used in a PRINT statement like this--

```
1000 PRINT PAPER 4; INK 6;"Green
 paper, yellow ink"
```

--will make only the words following it have those attributes. The rest of the screen will remain with whatever PAPER and INK colors it had before, and subsequent PRINT statements, unless attributes are defined in the statement itself as here, will have the same colors as the screen. The same conditions apply to INVERSE, BRIGHT, FLASH, and BRIGHT.

For information on some of the functions not covered in the Timex manual, see in previous issues "What they didn't tell you in the manual."

"Programming tips, part 2," continued from page 5

highly accurate for a home computer and would even be the envy of many a mainframe computer! I will have more on this in a future issue.

These comments also apply to the 2068 in general. I see a lot of duplication of PRINT statements unnecessarily, as in this example from one book:

```
3002 PRINT TAB 10;"BATTLESHIPS"
3004 PRINT TAB 10;"-----------"
3006 PRINT AT 3,0;"SET UP YOUR
SHIPS ON THE TOPHALF OF THE S
CREEN."
3007 PRINT
3008 PRINT "ALL COORDINATES SHOU
LD BE IN THEFORM LETTER FOLLOWED
 BY NUMBER."
3009 PRINT
```

All of this can be consolidated in one PRINT statement at a huge savings in memory:

```
3005 PRINT TAB 10;"BATTLESHIPS";
TAB 10;"-----------";AT 3,0;"SET
 UP YOUR  SHIPS ON THE  TOPHAL
F OF THE SCREEN.",,,"ALL COORDIN
ATES SHOULD BE IN THEFORM LETTER
 FOLLOWED BY NUMBER.",,,
```

There is a saving of over 20 bytes in this consolidated PRINT statement. Note the use of the commas to skip half-screens. Recall that the comma in a print statement moves the PRINT position to the next column 0 or 16, whichever is next, provided that there is at least one space between the last thing printed and the next half-screen. If something was printed on column 31, the print comma will cause the next item to be printed on column 16, not column 0.

Incidentally, the program portion above is from Roger Valentine's excellent book *What Can I Do with My Timex/Sinclair 1000? Lots!*

The Sinclair computers are nearly unique in that a line of BASIC can be of arbitrary length as opposed to being limited to, say, 72 characters. This limit length in other BASICs--it does vary from one BASIC to another--must be kept in mind if you are writing "portable" code, code that can be run on any BASIC with little or no modification. Valentine undoubtedly kept the lines in his program short on purpose for the novice programmer.

The Sinclair computers are also unusual in that their BASIC allows variable names of more than one letter; also, strings, including those assigned to a variable, may be in theory up to 65535 characters long. These features can be handy, but keep in mind the restrictions in most BASICS if writing portable code.

One last handy trick for this time is the definition of blank strings. Instead of using PRINT "   " (32 spaces) in a program, especially if it is used more than once, just define a blank string of the required length at the beginning: DIM B$ (32). Unless filled later, each character in B$ will be a blank space, and you may merely type PRINT B$ each time, saving typing time and memory.

"Exit Maxwell, enter Dixons," continued from page 1

sell in the lead up to Christmas" in "a three month sales blitz of Sinclair products."

The article stated that the Spectrum had sold some 130 000 units this year, with only about 60 000 sales for the QL since its spring 1984 UK introduction. "Sales for both products are considerably down on what had been expected. Even so Sinclair does still have about 40% of the home computer market for machines under £500."

Dixons have an uphill battle to return Sinclair to profitability: "Sinclair Research's results are expected next month. They are likely to show a sizeable loss on sales of about £100 [million]." However, Souhami said, "Sinclair is the undisputed brand leader in computers, and as the company's leading retailer of computers, we are delighted to have signed this major contract."

Sir Clive called the contract "immensely exciting"; "we can now view the future with complete confidence." The next few months will be crucial. Watch this space.

"1985 VENDORS followup," continued from page 4

Your Spectrum
14 Rathbone Place
London W1P 1DE
UNITED KINGDOM
M/Magazine

James Zilvitis
37-A Skyhollow Court
Oakville, CN 96779
C/15, 20, Spec (with, without power supply)
H/2050
S/various (10, 20?, Spec?)

Coming in next month's issue: How accurate are the BASIC math routines in the Sinclair computers? You may be surprised. Look next month as they are put through their paces in some pretty tough tests.

More programming tips and tricks.

C4

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